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KT photo | **Tim Bath**

House of Burgess: Trump, you're fired

Today couldn't have arrived soon enough

By Rob Burgess
Tribune columnist

Election Day. Freedom. It has been 454 days since I began writing about this unholy presidential election. Today couldn’t have arrived soon enough.

My final column before this election cycle concludes is not designed to tell you for whom to vote. Cast your ballot for Democrat Hillary Clinton or former New Mexico Gov. Gary Johnson of the Libertarian Party. You can even write in Dr. Jill Stein of the Green Party, Vermont Sen. Bernie Sanders

or President Abraham Lincoln for all I care. By now, you should be noticing a name missing from that list.

I've heard the line that a vote for anyone but Clinton is a vote for Republican candidate Donald Trump. I see why some people say that, but I want to have some sympathy for those who can't stand any of the available options. Only a vote for Trump is a vote for Trump. If you're on the fence and cast a protest vote or simply stay home, it's not going to help Clinton, of course, but it won't help Trump, either. If you have even momentarily entertained the idea of voting for Trump at any point during this election cycle and then gone in a different direction, no matter which, I consider that a victory. (Besides, given the tyranny of the racist vestige of the Three-Fifths Compromise known as the Electoral College, Indiana's 11 electoral votes will most assuredly go to Trump, anyway. It's all about popular vote numbers at this point.)

Trump will not be elected president today. The only question left is how few votes he receives. His count has to be as low as possible. He has to lose big league. (Or, bigly, as I like to imagine he says.) If it's even close, there will be pandemonium. He's already sown the seeds for chaos by suggesting he won't accept the results of the election, which he calls "rigged." (Nevermind the fact in-person voter fraud is nearly nonexistent. And FBI Director James Comey, WikiLeaks founder Julian Assange, Russian President Vladimir Putin and the Supreme Court's decision in the case of Shelby County v. Holder,

which gutted the Voting Rights Act, have all placed their thumbs on the scale in various ways in favor of Trump.)

Whatever you do, don’t tell yourself the lie that all these options are equally bad. Don’t give yourself permission to accept a false equivalency. In fact, here’s a bit of free advice for the GOP in 2020: Clinton is a deeply flawed candidate. She has many weaknesses and vulnerabilities that would be easy for an opponent to exploit if it were anyone but Trump. Imagine someone who isn’t a human Dumpster fire facing her in the general election, but with Trump’s same positions, such as they are. That person could absolutely win.

Clinton is an old-school, gradualist, establishment, smoke-filled-backroom-dealing, you-scratch-my-back-I’ll-scratch-yours politician. She’s far from clean. But I don’t doubt her sanity. If she or any other candidate attempted one of Trump’s moves, you’d never hear from her again.

Imagine the outcry if she mocked a disabled journalist, beefed with a Gold Star family, disparaged POWs, bragged about the size of her reproductive organs at a debate, started 3 a.m. Twitter flame wars against a former beauty pageant contestant, gave out a primary rival’s cellphone number during a rally or engaged in any of the other countless, daily outrages in which Trump specializes.

Now that all that is over, look forward to writing not another word about Trump unless he does something truly noteworthy like deciding to run for

president once again. (Shudder.) And now, the sentence I've waited more than a year to type:

Donald Trump, you're fired.

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